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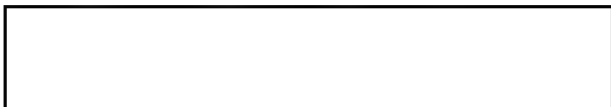
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USSR- France: [Differences on key international issues are becoming irritants in both countries' efforts to establish closer bilateral relations.]

[The French ambassador in Moscow said recently that Foreign Minister Gromyko gave him a 90-minute lecture on the French position on the draft nonproliferation treaty. The Soviet Embassy in Paris raised the same subject with the French Foreign Ministry. Moscow apparently wants to make clear that it does not expect Paris to buttress Bonn's resistance to the treaty.]

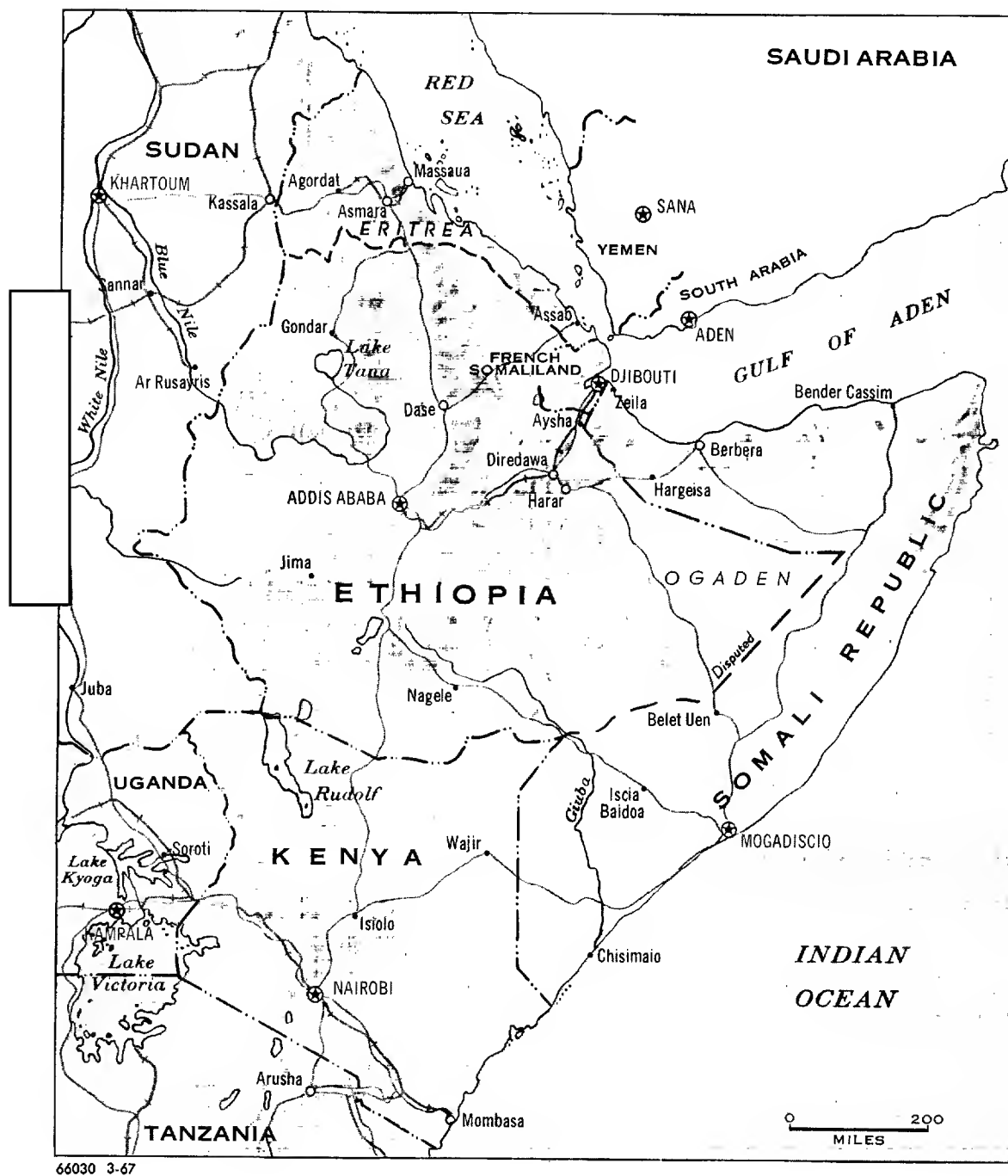
[Moscow probably also did not welcome the French pledge to back West Germany's diplomatic offensive in Eastern Europe. For his part, De Gaulle may be miffed that Premier Kosygin, while in England, gave the British a chance to upstage the French through his proposal of a Soviet-British friendship treaty. The French, moreover, who feel they have a special interest in Vietnam, are not likely to have appreciated Kosygin's well-publicized dealings with Britain on this issue.]

[Some discord may also have developed because France still has not signed the outer space treaty.]

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French Somaliland: [French officials are becoming more confident that French Somaliland will vote to remain with France in the 19 March referendum.]

[Redacted] Voter registration figures appear to bear out this prediction, since the French have registered some 22,000 Afar tribal people, 1,400 Arabs, and 900 Frenchmen, most of whom are believed to favor French ties, as against a registration of some 15,000 Somalis opposing them.]

[A recent split in the Afar community cast some doubt on the referendum's outcome, suggesting a close vote or even an upset, but the French now believe they have largely healed this split.]

[The referendum campaign has sharply heightened tribal antagonisms, and a pro-French vote appears virtually certain to set off wide-scale Somali demonstrations in Djibouti and the Somali Republic. France has some 3,500 troops and police in French Somaliland to maintain order. Tribal animosities will continue, however, and the French may have great difficulty getting meaningful cooperation between Afars and Somalis in the postreferendum period.]

[Mogadiscio, frustrated over Paris' refusal to permit UN supervision of the vote, is already charging French rigging and might make new appeals for intervention to the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity. It may also encourage Somali guerrilla activity and sabotage of the port and the Djibouti - Addis Ababa Railroad.]

[The greatest risk, however, is that the Somali Republic and Ethiopia may clash in the event the voting goes in favor of independence. Somalia has moved military forces close to the border.]

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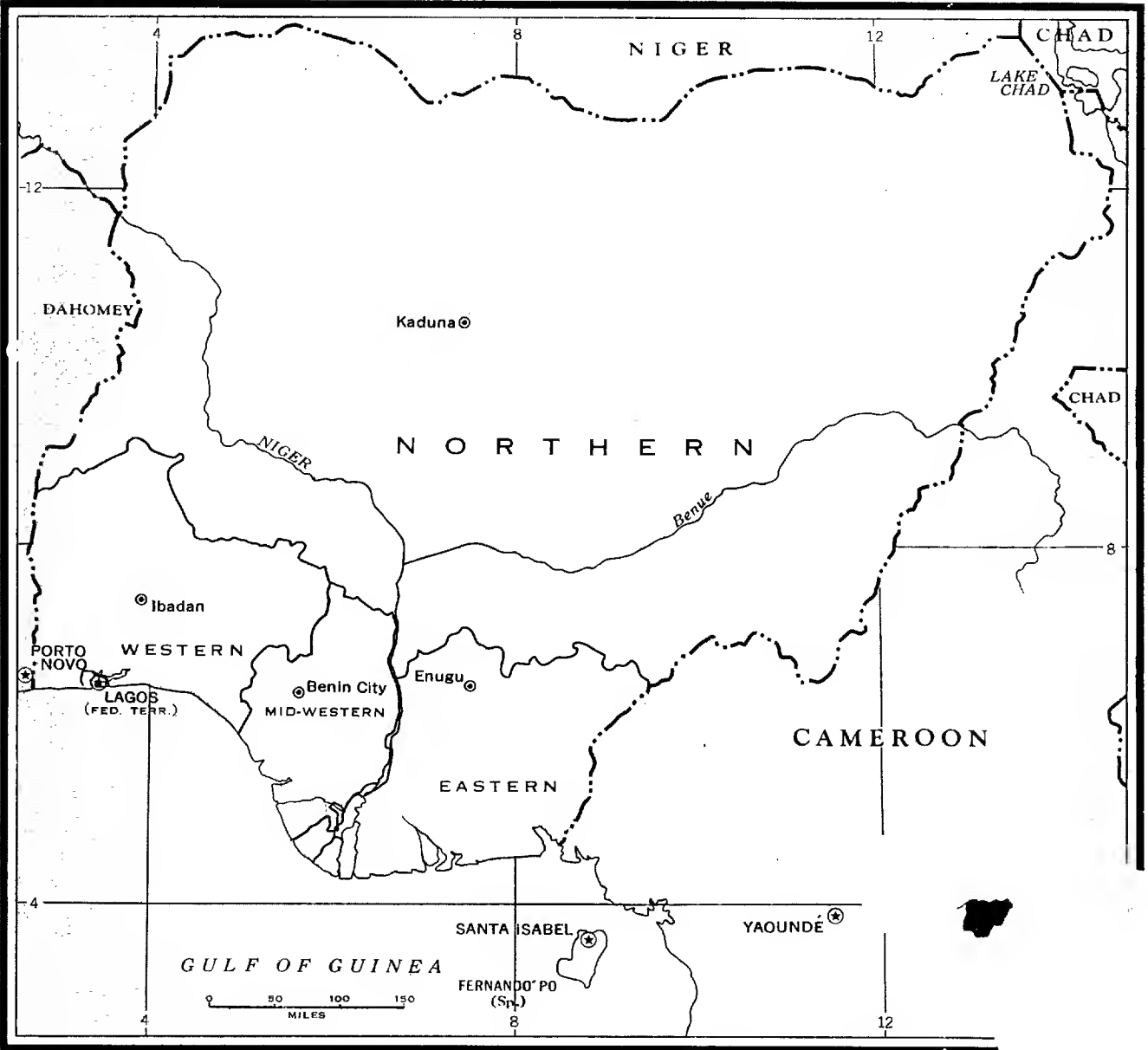
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[Ethiopia has been working with France to ensure that the French remain and appears confident of a pro-French vote. Emperor Haile Selassie has left little doubt that he would intervene militarily if the territory were to fall under Somali control. Ethiopia began moving three battalions in the direction of French Somaliland on 15 March.]

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NIGERIA



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Nigeria: The Western Region appears to be joining the Eastern Region in its opposition to Northern domination of the country.

The prospect of continued occupation of the West by Northern troops has propelled its Yoruba leaders increasingly to align themselves with the views of Eastern Military Governor Ojukwu. Activist elements among the Yorubas, who were heavily involved in extensive civil disturbances in the West in late 1965, are evidently making plans and accumulating arms for a possible Yoruba uprising to throw out the Northerners.

Ojukwu, for his part, has been making an open bid--most recently in his 13 March press conference--for support from the Western and Mid-Western regions against the Northerners. This was almost certainly one of the principal objectives of his visit to the capital of the Mid-Western Region on 12 March--his first to any part of Nigeria outside the East since the Northerners reclaimed national power last July.

Although a temporary coincidence of interests may link the dominant elements of the three southern regions in tactical moves to reduce Northern influence, prospects for the emergence of any stable southern "front" are dim because of deep-seated antagonisms among the elements involved.

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